The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretation of matters affecting labor occurring in the industrial, legislative, and judicial fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

Entered as second-class matter September 30, 1912, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the Act of August 24, 1912. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Sec. 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized July 11, 1918.

There is one art of which man should be master—the art of reflection.—Coleridge.

WHOLE NO. 1293 | WILLIAM GREEN, President | WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 1936 | FRANK MORRISON, Secretary-Treasurer | VOL. 26 NO. 4

High Wages Urged By Senator Holt

Increased Buying Power for Masses Held Essential for Recovery—Progress of Organized Labor in West Virginia Cited.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

A strong condemnation of low wages, as a major element in causing business depressions and retarding recovery and an equally strong tribute to the influence of organized labor in bettering the economic conditions of working men and women featured the address delivered by United States Senator Rush D. Holt before the recent annual convention of the American Federation of Labor.

Declaring that the endorsement of his candidacy for the Senate by the A. F. of L. was largely responsible for his election, Senator Holt said:

"I have attended a number of conventions in the last nine months, since going to Washington, but I want to say that I really enjoy being here at this convention more than any other convention that I have attended, because I believe in organized labor.

"All my short life, and it is very short, because most of you know my age is only 30, I have seen many politicians who love organized labor just before they are elected and forget them soon after the election.

Labor Conditions in West Virginia

"I am proud to say that in the four years I served as a member of the West Virginia Legislature I had a 100 per cent labor record. I never missed a roll call nor did I ever vote against union labor. And may I say in anticipation that when I finish my six years in the United States Senate you will find that I have a 100 per cent labor record there, too.

"I come from a State where a few years ago it was not very good policy to be connected with the labor movement if you were in politics, because we felt the effect of those who were out to destroy organized labor.

"In the coal fields of West Virginia as well as in the factories and other places where men are employed we could see the people getting the benefit of protection at the hands of those elected, no matter what party it might be, who would beat down organized labor.

"But West Virginia has seen a new light and West Virginia believes in organized labor more today than it has ever believed in it before, and it is going to continue along that pathway.

"Down in the coal fields of southern West Virginia we have seen coal miners forced to work, 10, 12, 14 hours a day and receiving $1.50 and $2 a day for doing it. Today those same men are working seven hours a day and receiving $5.10.

"That has not hurt the coal operators because the coal operators of southern West Virginia are better off today than they have ever been at any time in their history, outside of the World War.

"In other words, when you give the benefit to organized labor, everyone reaps that benefit.

Larger Mass Purchasing Power

"You must restore the purchasing power to the laboring man if you want to restore prosperity to this country.

"Prosperity comes when labor is employed, whether it be in the mill, mine, or factory, or on the farm.

"It is the American farmer and the American laboring man who spends the money; it is not these coupon clippers who spend the money and bring prosperity. It is the people who spend, and the American working man must spend, because he must live.

"As I have said in other speeches, and I want to repeat it here, the American working man will buy more meat in a day than these coupon clippers will buy in a week, and the American working man will wear out more clothes, except the seat of his pants, in a day than they will in a month.

Jobs for All Jobless

"If you want the mills to sell the products of industry, put the American laboring men to work and they will sell those products.

"These false profiteers and short-sighted industrialists do not realize that you cannot have dividends if the American people cannot buy their products, and when ten or fifteen million American working men are walking the streets, begging for employment, how can you expect to have prosperity? We must put them to work, and they must be put to work at a wage on which they can live.

"This idea of starvation wages is a relic of the dark ages and must go in this country. We must give people a living wage, not a wage of $50 and $60 a month, but a wage that they can spend in order to continue to live in this country.

Defies Coal Barons

"It has been said that I was elected by the labor movement. I say that, too, and I am proud of it. There is no industrial boss, there is no yellow dog coal operator in West Virginia who can tell me what to do when I vote there.

"Those men have issued yellow dog injunctions against the poor miners of our State for years and years. They have issued the same kind of yellow dog injunctions to those that they send to Congress and to the legislature, but the day of the yellow dog injunction on miners and politicans is past.

"We are on the road to a brighter day, for a brighter new deal for those who labor in our State.

"Not only that, but those people have fought and fought bitterly against so-called labor running our country. We have tried these 'old dealers' and we have seen the effect. We have seen fifteen million people walking the streets, we have seen the banks close, we have seen the constables tacking notices on the doors of the mechants back in the good old days of the old deal.

"I have listened to these industrialists talk about the danger of labor controlling the Government. If one must choose between the industrialists controlling the Government and labor controlling the Government, I will take my side with labor."

EDITORIALS

COURT REVIEW OF CANADIAN LABOR LEGISLATION

The social security laws enacted by the last session of the Canadian Parliament have been taken to the Canadian Supreme Court to be tested on constitutional grounds.

The legislation challenged includes insurance against unemployment, maximum hours of labor, minimum wages and the weekly day of rest.

The social justice laws are being considered on a new constitutional basis. Hitherto legislation on insurance and labor questions has been controlled by the provincial governments. But under the provisions of the Federal Constitution the Dominion Parliament has authority to enact legislation necessary for the performance of the obligations connected with external treaties.

Canada signed the Versailles Peace Treaty, which established the League of Nations and the International Labor Organization. Acting under authority of the Versailles Treaty the International Labor Organization has submitted various labor conventions to the governments of the signatory powers who are also members of the I. L. O.

The Canadian Government contends that even though it may be trespassing on the traditional jurisdiction of the provinces in enacting labor and insurance legislation, it has complete authority to do so because of its membership in the International Labor Organization, which obligates it to implement the labor conventions. The I. L. O. convention, it holds, are in effect labor treaties.

LAND VALUE TAX VISIONED FOR CALIFORNIA

The prospects for the enactment of the Ralston Tax Relief Amendment by the voters of California at the election next November are encouraging, according to Mrs. Anna George de Mille, a daughter of Henry George, originator of the single-tax plan, who has recently spent some time in that State surveying the situation.

The Ralston amendment proposes to abolish the sales tax and during a five-year period to transfer taxes from homestead improvements and personal property to land values. The author of the amendment is Jackson H. Ralston, formerly a well-known attorney in Washington, D. C., and for many years legal counsel for the American Federation of Labor. He moved to California when he retired from law practice.

Mrs. de Mille, who lives in New York City, said "the amendment will stimulate industry and decrease profiteering in land values," adding: "The laboring men and the merchants and manufacturers, who regard a tax as a fine, are behind it."

She expressed the belief that the proposal would not increase the taxes of moving picture producers. It would boost the taxes on their land, but, on the other hand, it would decrease the taxes on improvements and technical equipment.

WPA INFORMATION CENSUS

Out of the urgent necessity imposed on the Works Progress Administration to provide work relief employment for thousands and thousands of white collar jobless large funds of information are being collected on a variety of subjects which have hitherto been slighted by both Government activities and private foundations.

Around 2,850 white collar projects were submitted to the WPA. Of these, 650 were approved. The studies which are being made fall into 18 large groups. They are:

Agriculture; banking, credit and securities; business and industry; consumption and prices; education and schools; employment, unemployment and occupations; local government; historical and research; mapping; national resources; planning; population and vital statistics; real property, land utilization and construction; recreation; social problems and welfare; traffic and motor accidents; wages and income.

Over $30,000,000 of the big $4,800,000,000 relief appropriation has been allocated to finance these studies. When finally compiled the material will be of great value in many departments of our national life.

SUPREME COURT CURB BILLS

The Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress rejected a motion reported to have been offered by Representative Warren J. Duffey of Ohio to table a number of bills providing for the removal of much of the power now exercised by the lower Federal courts and the United States Supreme Court to declare laws enacted by Congress unconstitutional.

The action of the committee leaves the way open for the consideration of the bills at a later date.

Representative Hatton W. Sumners, chairman of the committee, said "considerable sentiment" had developed in the House in the direction of restricting the power of the court, but added that the committee would not act without giving "full consideration" to all angles of the subject.

7 Years' Tragedy Of Unemployment

Army of Jobless Has Ranged from 613,751 in 1929 to 15,652,887 in 1933, Dropping to 11,672,187 in November, 1935.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

The terrible persistence of unemployment imposed on millions of working men and women in the United States by the continued refusal of employers to shorten hours so as to provide work for all and raise wages to create increased buying power for the masses is poignantly revealed in the latest estimate issued by the American Federation of Labor covering unemployment from January, 1929, to November, 1935.

The statistics, which are compiled from records of the United States Government, reveal that those who own and control American industry, and therefore work opportunities for the toilers, are responsible for an army of jobless working men and women ranging from a low of 613,751 in September, 1929, just before the stock market crash, to a high point of 15,652,887 in March, 1933.

From the 1933 high the out-of-work legions have ranged gradually downward, reaching a low of 11,448,986 in October, 1935.

The tragedy is intensified by the fact that the distress imposed on unemployed adults has been extended to their families, adding many millions of dependents to the suffering decreed by industrial overlords who declare that profits for the owners of industry must have a preference over employment and wages for the jobless millions.

Following is the A. F. of L. estimate of employment by months from January, 1929, to November, 1935:

1929	
January	3,059,956
February	3,118,695
March	2,560,310
April	2,042,733
May	1,753,812
June	1,447,233
July	1,214,446
August	1,063,789
September	613,751
October	910,479
November	1,948,856
December	2,628,841
1930	
January	3,918,821
February	4,285,664
March	4,323,460
April	4,048,682
May	3,755,728
June	3,904,856
July	4,440,548
August	4,918,702
September	4,983,411
October	5,525,036
November	6,292,871
December	6,840,827
1931	
January	8,168,565
February	8,273,844
March	8,132,616
April	7,814,975
May	7,810,918
June	7,893,943
July	8,366,604
August	8,759,801
September	8,846,086
October	9,483,526
November	10,410,483
December	10,888,796
1932	
January	11,925,928
February	12,168,500
March	12,386,722
April	12,519,446
May	13,004,050
June	13,372,506
July	13,792,562
August	13,967,695
September	13,458,328
October	13,415,173
November	13,925,102
December	14,239,800
1933	
January	15,166,257
February	15,318,760
March	15,652,887
April	15,124,843
May	14,615,041
June	13,842,917
July	13,457,981
August	12,661,641
September	11,853,695
October	11,842,483
November	12,374,395
December	12,759,623
1934	
January	13,382,017
February	12,963,972
March	12,420,405
April	12,003,888
May	11,710,839
June	11,714,342
July	12,222,339
August	12,361,763
September	12,428,590
October	12,212,690
November	12,580,535
December	12,358,989
1935	
January	13,058,215
February	12,763,898
March	12,608,127
April	12,379,077
May	12,382,251
June	12,388,872
July	12,475,340
August	12,218,500
September	11,788,544
October	11,448,986
November	11,672,187

EXPLOSION KILLS WORKER

St. Louis, Mo. (AFLNS).—George A. Stringer, a pipefitter's helper, one of six men injured in an explosion in the chlorobenzene plant of the Monsanto Chemical Company here, died three days later from cerebral hemorrhage resulting from a skull fracture. He is survived by his wife and nine-year-old twin daughters.

Thirty Hour Work Week Urged As Job Creator For Idle

Enactment of Black-Connery Bill Is Necessary to Provide Employment and Wages for Millions of Jobless, Ornburn Says.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington, D. C.—Immediate enactment by Congress of the Black-Connery 30-Hour Week Bill was urged as a solution of the unemployment problem by I. M. Ornburn, secretary-treasurer of the Union Label Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor, in a radio address here over the national network of the Columbia Broadcasting System.

Pointing out that although the Federal Government is providing temporary relief work for around 3,500,000 jobless, "there are still over eleven million workers who are waiting for a steady job at a wage which will keep their families in comfort according to the American standard of living," Mr. Ornburn said the only practical solution of the unemployment problem "is the one which is offered by the American Federation of Labor. It is shorter hours with no reduction in pay.

"By reducing hours, more workers can obtain jobs. By maintaining the prevailing weekly wage scale, and with more men at work, we shall be able to increase purchasing power. It is simple arithmetic.

"If, in 1936, Senator Black's 30-Hour Week Bill had been passed by Congress and signed by the President, it would have done more to solve the problem of obtaining jobs for the eleven million idle workers than all the other legislation with its uncertainty owing to inefficient administration and the interpretation of the courts.

"Senator Black's 30-Hour Week Bill is the most constructive measure that has been advanced for the solution of unemployment. It will mean a six-hour day and a five-day week. It is the paramount issue of the American Federation of Labor. It is hoped that everyone who is interested in a shorter work week program will write to both their United States Senators and also their Representatives at Washington, D. C., and ask them to vote for the Black-Connery 30-Hour Week Bill."

Problem of Machine Production

"The only certain way," Mr. Ornburn continued, "in which the workers of America can meet technological progress—that is, the use of machinery and new inventions—is to join a labor union and when they have joined in sufficient numbers, they will be able, through collective bargaining, to shorten the hours of work and maintain the American wage standard.

"When hours are shortened, machinery will be a blessing instead of a curse. There will be more time for education and self-development. More time for spending the increased purchasing power which will accrue from shorter hours with the same pay. This is the path and the only path on which America will work its way back to better times for the average citizen.

"It is true that a few may prosper now and the newspapers may display this limited prosperity of the few as if it were the end of this depression for all of us, but the fact remains that millions of small independent manufacturers, business men and professional men as well as the jobless workers have reached the last of their savings and equities and want a general upsurge like a great tidal wave across the entire continent instead of a few ripples in Wall Street stocks.

"As hours are adjusted to absorb the idle workers, we must continue to buy our own products. First, we must buy all the American-made goods that we can to keep the purchasing power at home. Then we must buy union-made goods and union services to maintain the high standard of wages, hours and working conditions which have been established by and only by the American labor movement.

Labor Protection in Government Contracts

"The American Federation of Labor, and especialy those labor unions affiliated with the Union Label Trades Department, are also deeply interested in the measure before Congress known as the Walsh Bill which provides that all persons who sell to the U. S. Government or enter into any contractual relations with it shall conform to the conditions contained in certain specifications, the purpose of which will be to maintain fair labor standards in connection with purchases, loans or grants where Federal funds are involved directly or indirectly.

"This measure seeks to confirm in law the principle that the first charge on any industry is the performance of its duty to society by paying adequate wages and maintaining decent working conditions. It will prevent the purchase by Federal officials of foreign-made and other unfair products to be used by the Government. Uncle Sam should set an example by buying American products which are made under American standards of living, established by the American Federation of Labor.

"The bill has passed the U. S. Senate and is now before the House of Representatives. In behalf of the Union Label Trades Department, I urge all members of labor unions and their friends to write to their Congressman and ask him to support the Walsh Bill."

PWA Projects Create Many Jobs for Nashville Labor

Nashville, Tenn. (AFLNS).—Public Works Administration projects calling for the expenditure of a number of million dollars during 1936 promise a lot of work for Nashville labor. Heading the list of big PWA projects are the slum clearance program costing $3,200,000, for which demolition and foundation contracts have been let, and the $2,000,000 city-county building, for which bids will be opened on January 21.

The slum clearance program includes a $1,700,000 project for white families and a $1,500,000 project for negroes. The work will last through 1937.

In addition, about three-fourths of Nashville's $2,000,000 PWA school building program is yet to be completed.

Local officials of the Federal Housing Administration predict that at least $1,500,000 will be spent for residential construction here during the year due to the advantages of FHA loans.

BROAD INTERPRETATION OF CONSTITUTION ASKED

Dr. Beard Claims Congressional Power to Legislate for General Interest Is Necessary to Preserve Our Government.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Dr. Charles A. Beard, outstanding American historian, in an address before the Independent Legislative Bureau at Washington, D. C., vigorously criticized those who would have the Constitution of the United States interpreted as a technical and narrow legalistic document stripped of human relations.

After critically reviewing the history of the Constitution, he declared its authors never meant that it should be narrowly construed.

"Only by broad and generous interpretation," he told some 70 Senators, Representatives, Government officials, lawyers, jurists and farm and labor leaders, "has it been possible for the Government of the United States to meet the exigencies of government, and for our people to settle their controversies under rules of law.

"Only once in nearly 150 years has it been deemed necessary to settle an issue by that old, old device—the sword. That was after the Supreme Court of the United States, in the Dred Scott case, declared, in effect, that the Government of the United States could not abolish slavery in its own territories. In 1862 a Republican Congress abolished it anyway."

Subversives Becloud Constitution

In an ironical prod at the subversive elements composing the American Liberty League, which has vehemently opposed all of the social justice measures enacted by Congress during the last three years, as well as similar measures before the present Congress, he said:

"Since the Constitution supports very well a host of lawyers, including our 58 self-styled guardians of liberty, they, in turn, as a Harvard wit has said, feel especially bound to support the Constitution. And in supporting it, they emit hundreds of thousands of words annually and becloud the famous instrument 'with such a fog that the ordinary layman either cannot see it at all, or becomes lost in the Delphic mysteries created by juristic minds.'"

Turning to the power of Congress to legislate in the interests of the masses, which is so vigorously fought by anti-labor and anti-social groups, Dr. Beard warned:

"Only on the theory that this country never again will have to face a crisis can we assume that a government stripped of the power to legislate in the general interest, will endure. To cherish such a theory is to fly in the face of the recorded experience of this Nation and all mankind."

ROOSEVELT NAMES HUSHING MARSHAL FOR CANAL ZONE

Senate Confirms Trade Unionist for Important Position

Washington, D. C. (AFLNS).—President Roosevelt nominated John E. Hushing, popularly known as "Red" Hushing, for United States Marshal of the Panama Canal Zone. The Senate promptly confirmed the appointment.

Mr. Hushing has been employed as a toolmaker in the Government shops of the Panama Canal at Balboa, Canal Zone, for the past 15 years.

He is a member of the International Machinists' Union, in continous good standing for 30 years and will remain so.

Prior to his Canal service he worked at his trade in Canada, Mexico and in every State in the Union. For several years he was the representative of the employes on the hospital board of the Missouri Pacific Railway and also general shop chairman for the Federated Shop Crafts in the large shops of the Missouri Pacific Railway at Sedalia, Mo.

He is 50 years of age and a brother of W. C. Hushing, national legislative representative and general organizer of the American Federation of Labor.

STAMPING CO. EMPLOYES CHOOSE A. F. OF L. UNION

Moundsville, W. Va.—Employes of United States Stamping Company here registered a decisive majority for Porcelain Enamel Workers' Union No. 18630, an A. F. of L. affiliate, as their representative for collective bargaining despite the militant opposition of the plant management who for a number of weeks had made persistent efforts to boost a company union composed largely of plant superintendents, foremen and the office force.

The vote was 239 in favor of the A. F. of L. union and 116 against, a majority of 123 for the Porcelain Enamel Workers. Fifty-two votes were challenged by the union and 14 by the company.

The election was held under the supervision of the National Labor Relations Board, in accordance with the provisions of the Wagner-Connery Labor Disputes Act. The balloting took place in a house near the main gate of the stamping plant. The polls were open from 11 A. M. to 9 P. M.

On the day of the election the company management distributed among its employes a circular letter designed to persuade them to vote against the A. F. of L. union, but a large majority of the workers paid no attention to anti-union propaganda.

PWA PUBLIC POWER PLANTS BLOCKED BY COURT DECREE

Washington, D. C. (AFLNS).—Utility corporations opposed to municipally owned light and power plants won at least a partial victory when Justice J. C. Adkins of the District of Columbia Supreme Court issued at their request 14 temporary injunctions restraining, pending a hearing, the Public Works Administration from making loans to various cities throughout the United States for the construction of publicly owned utilities and one injunction blocking loans for the construction of a municipal water plant.

The private utility officials claimed the municipally owned and operated projects would be detrimental to the property interests of their companies, and that therefore the Federal Government had no constitutional right to assist these projects with PWA funds.

Teachers College Anti-Union Policy Hit by Committee

Columbia University Unit Found Guilty of Victimizing Union Members in Both Wages and Employment.

By A. F. of L. News Service.

The management of the dining halls operated by the Teachers College of Columbia University, New York City, have been found guilty of discriminating against trade union members in terms of employment and of imposing much heavier wage cuts on workers than on the managerial staff.

The verdict was rendered by a committee appointed late in October by Dean William F. Russell to investigate discontent which had arisen resulting from the dismissal of four cafeteria employes and from the general anti-union and low wage policy of the college.

The members of the committee were: Dr. John L. Childs, chairman; Prof. Adelaide Case, Prof. William D. Reeve, Dr. Sherman G. Crayton and Mrs. Fannie R. Shaftel. Dr. Crayton and Mrs. Shaftel are students at the college.

On the subject of wage discrimination the committee pointed out that until recently the dining halls, although not run for profit, "have produced a surplus for the college, but that the percentage wage cut imposed on the workers was at least twice that received by the members of the supervisory and administrative staff." Illustrating this extreme injustice, the committee declared that while during the past five years wage cuts totaling 40 per cent had been handed out to the workers the salaries of the director and supervisors were reduced by a maximum of only 4 per cent.

Union Members Victimized

A part of the controversy was vitally concerned with the Independent Hotel, Restaurant and Cafeteria Workers' Union of America, an affiliate of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' International Alliance, whose members it was claimed had been discriminated against. The verdict of the committee was that the organization "is a bona fide labor union devoted to the interests of its members."

The committee found that four employes of the dining halls were dismissed and not re-employed because of their "union membership and activity," and that "the conflict between the open shop practices of Teachers College and the desire of the men to be represented by a labor union of their own choosing is the basic cause of the problem."

Declaring that the union to which the employes belong has not been recognized during the past three years by either the college or dining hall administration "as a legitimate spokesman for any of the employes," the committee added:

"The dining halls have no arrangement for employe representation. The responsibility is centered in the director. She makes the policies, determines the budget and the salary and wage scales, has final authority to 'hire and fire,' and has the power to pass upon all individual grievances."

The committee also declared that when the wage-reducing policy was applied the maximum wage cut was imposed on union men, while some of the other employes who were not active in the wage agitation did not receive such drastic pay reductions. Moreover, the committee stated, "six full-time employes, all of whom were union men, were the only full-time workers discharged during the last three years."

Open Shop Condemned

In summing up its investigation the committee declared that the deeper source of the difficulty lies "in the conflict between the open-shop practices of Teachers College and the desire of these men to be represented by a labor union of their own choosing," adding:

"Unless this aspect of the problem is dealt with adequately and effectively, it is likely that further trouble will be experienced."

Pointing out that "an establishment in which the management refuses to deal with a union that is seeking to protect its members, is in reality a shop closed to the union," the committee warned:

"It is this conflict between the open-shop practice and a union seeking to protect its members against wage cuts and to help them better their conditions which lies at the root of many of the present difficulties in the dining halls of Teachers College. Three years of deepening turmoil and misunderstanding clearly show that a plant cannot continue indefinitely with an unrecognized union."

Because Teachers College occupies a strategic place in American education, the report concluded, it should, as a consistent part of its total educational program, "illustrate in its relations with its employes the same democratic principles which it advocates for the school world.

"The situation disclosed by this investigation makes it clear that if the college is to do this adequately under changing social conditions, it must have a considered labor policy.

"We are gratified, therefore, that Dean Russell, conscious of this need, has already announced his plan for a committee composed of faculty and trustee members to make a thorough review of the traditional open-shop labor practice of Teachers College in terms of conditions and standards of 1935."

SENATE PASSES 24 PER CENT SMALL LOAN BILL FOR D. C.

Washington, D. C. (AFLNS).—The new small loans bill for the District of Columbia passed by the Senate provides a flat interest rate of 2 per cent per month instead of the present 1 per cent rate. The new rate includes a number of incidental charges, fees and expenses which under the present 1 per cent law frequently raise the borrower's costs as high as 30 per cent.

On character loans a fee running from $1 to $3, depending on the size of the loan, in addition to the interest, may be charged for a credit investigation and report. On collateral loans, a title examination fee not to exceed $3, a mortgage recording fee not to exceed $1, and actual insurance premiums paid on collateral security be charged in addition to the interest.

The House of Representatives has not yet acted on the measure.

"TUNNEL OF DEATH"

By A. F. of L. News Service.

Washington, D. C.—An outstanding illustration of the inhuman and brutal conditions imposed on workers by many corporations were brought into the limelight in the testimony of Miss Philippa Allen, a New York social service worker, before the House Labor Sub-Committee, headed by Representative Griswold of Indiana, to investigate the tunnel tragedy at Gauley Bridge, W. Va., where hundreds of workers died of silicosis contracted on tunnel work and hundreds more are approaching death with no remedy for the dread disease. The resolution calling for the investigation was introduced by Representative Marcantonio of New York.

Silicosis is a lung disease. It is always fatal. Frequently it develops many years after exposure to silica dust and cannot be stopped. Its victims strangle to death.

The tunnel was constructed by Rhinehart & Dennis, a subsidiary of the Union Carbide and Carbon Company, in connection with an electric power project. Undoubtedly all of the tragedies could have been prevented if modern methods of dust prevention had been used in the construction work.

Miss Allen whose investigation extended over a period of four years, described the Gauley Bridge project as a "Tunnel of Death."

She said that when she was there in the summer of 1934, although the tunnel had been completed years before, the victims of silicosis were dying like flies.

No Record of Fatalities

She told the committee that, although it was impossible to give the exact number of dead, she had developed indisputable facts proving that approximately 500 workers employed in the construction of the tunnel had died from silicosis and 1,500 more were suffering from the disease.

In enumerating the difficulties experienced in ascertaining the exact number of fatalities, she mentioned the fact that many of the workers, colored and white, left their jobs when they became ill and returned home. She declared that "out of 2,000 former workers, hundreds have been examined by doctors and not more than a handful was found to be free from silicosis."

Witnesses Were Threatened

Pointing out that the first suit for damages brought against the Union Carbide and Carbon Company was settled out of court, Miss Allen declared that men were threatened with penitentiary sentences if they did not testify for the company, adding: "Furthermore, court records of damage suits brought by families of victims show that many of the dead were buried in a cornfield without markers and without means of identification."

Boy Dies in Agony

According to her testimony doctors at first would not tell the silicosis victims what was the matter with them. One woman, Mrs. Charlie Jones, was the first to discover the cause of the deaths. Her husband and three sons worked in the tunnel. She found the silica dust while washing their clothing. Her suspicions were aroused. She begged along the roads for money to pay for an X-ray examination of her youngest son. "Three weeks after the examination had been made and silicosis identified as his trouble the boy died in horrible agony." The first suit for damages against the company was brought by Mrs. Jones in the case of her son.

Sweatshop Wages Imposed

In describing the conditions other than dust hazards which were imposed upon the tunnel employes, Miss Allen declared that workers were imported from South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Ohio and Pennsylvania with the understanding that high wages would be paid and good working conditions established. In 1930 the wage rate was 50 cents an hour, but with the large number of workers brought in by the company the management decided they could cut wages drastically and in the application of this plan reduced the pay to 40 cents, then to 30 cents and finally to 25 cents per hour for a 10-hour day.

Living conditions were horrible in the camps she said. Frequently the men had to sit on dynamite and walk two miles to secure water.

Negro workers were discriminated against. They were "treated like mules," and were the first to be killed by silicosis.

Air Was Thick With Dust

Testimony in the suits for damages, Miss Allen declared, revealed that the "silicia dust was so thick in the tunnel the men could only see 10 or 15 feet before them," and that it caused a collision in which a brakemen barely escaped death by leaping from his platform just before the crash.

According to one affidavit by a tunnel worker, the "men's clothing was thick with dust—dust was in their hair, on their faces and in their eyebrows."

Another affidavit read: "Dust was so thick I had to carry a lantern, and it settled so thick on the drinking water I had to carry milk down in the tunnel to drink instead."

Hasty Burials Charged

Miss Allen specifically charged company officials with making every effort to cover up news of the appalling increase in deaths by burying the bodies of victims "before they were cold."

One negro worker, she said, died at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and was buried an hour later "without even having his body washed of the dust that killed him."

Company Held Responsible

In regard to the responsibility for the tragedy of hundreds of workers being killed by silicosis and hundreds more dragging out their weary lives awaiting the inevitable call, Miss Allen expressed the firm belief, substantiated by experts on dust prevention, that "dry drilling, which resulted in immense, choking clouds of silica dust, was the direct cause of the tragedy."

"Rhinehart & Dennis, the contractors, knew perfectly well," she said, "the fate to which they were exposing their workers when they failed to provide safety equipment.

"They also knew dry drilling was against the law as well as dangerous. Workers told me lookouts were posted regularly at the tunnel entrances to warn foremen below of the approach of State mine inspectors.

"When the mine inspectors made their rounds, the dry drilling was stopped and the equipment hidden."